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SENSITIVE

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SUBJECT: November 24 Goma Update

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED - PROTECT ACCORDINGLY

Note: Following report was submitted November 22 by Political
Counselor David Brown, currently on TDY in Goma. End note.

FARDC attack near Goma-Rushuru road

1. (SBU) The FARDC attacked a CNDP position above the Goma-Rutshuru road near Rugari yesterday morning. A Dakar-based AP team reported observing FARDC troops loading mobile rocket-launchers onto trucks in the vicinity around midday following the action. They said a FARDC colonel told them CNDP positions had moved closer to the road recently. The colonel said the FARDC had taken action to re-establish control of the road and had pushed back the CNDP elements there. The AP team also observed several FARDC mortars in fixed positions near the roadside, and one wounded soldier. MONUC is currently cautioning against travel on the road. MONUC-Goma head of office Ulli Mwambulutuku said recent operations may indicate the FARDC is attempting to provoke Nkunda by probing areas under control of his troops. Rugari is located in what Mwambulutuku characterized as a "very sensitive place," Nkunda-controlled territory on Congo-Uganda-Rwanda border. It is also the pivot of a path between that enclave and another in Tomgo to the west.

Rutshuru update

2. (SBU) Jane Coyne of Medecins Sans Frontieres, which operates Rutshuru town's only hospital, said doctors there treated 32 gunshot victims there following the FARDC-CNDP clash Wednesday. All but three were civilians, most lightly wounded but including one fatality. She said the hospital is located only 200 yards from the FARDC battalion headquarters which was the target of a CNDP attack. Separately, Lt. Col. Sandeep Jaswal, MONUC's chief intelligence officer, reported that telephone calls to belligerent commanders by Lt. Col. R. Parmar, the MONUC commander at Kiwanji base north of the town, succeeded in bringing the shooting to an end and withdrawal by CNDP forces from the town shortly after the action had begun.

Serufuli lobbies for MONUC MOB

3. (SBU) Provincial deputy Eugene Serufuli asked for assistance to convince MONUC to establish a mobile operations base (MOB) near Bunagana in Rutshuru territory to encourage the return of residents who fled to the Ugandan town of Kisoro. Serufuli, a controversial former senior RCD official and governor during the Transition, retains strong ties to the Hutu communities of his Rutshuru power base. He said the refugees tell him they want to return home, but UNHCR plans to relocate them away from the border at the end of the month. I relayed his message to Mwambulutuku. Bunagana is part of

the CNDP tri-border enclave and the fief of Col. Makenga, a top Nkunda commander suspected of serious abuses against alleged FDLR sympathizers during his tenure as head of the Bravo mixed brigade. Parmar told the WFP-led assessment mission on Wednesday that a MONUC MOB established near Jomba in the same enclave has helped facilitate the return of some 70 per cent of the town's residents.

SADC generals surprised to find no war in Goma

¶4. (SBU) The 21-member Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) defense and security mission have been surprised not to encounter war zone conditions in Goma. Mwambulutuku said MONUC's briefing yesterday was "a real eye-opener" for the delegation, composed principally of senior military and intelligence officers and headed by an Angolan lieutenant general. He said delegates' questions included what it would take for the FARDC to become "a real army," and the new role of the United States. The mission arrived November 22, and was scheduled to visit Sake and the Mugunga IDP complex yesterday and Bukavu today before returning for meetings with the FARDC regional command and OCHA.

MONUC again appeals for FARDC information-sharing

¶5. (SBU) The FARDC regional command continues to be averse to sharing information with MONUC about North Kivu operations. Mwambulutuku reported MONUC commanders told Kayembe and Gaye directly that the FARDC needs to share information about troop movements and intelligence. Last week's Mugunga incident, the result of FARDC deployment of heavy artillery at its camp in the middle of the sprawling IDP complex despite repeated warnings from North Kivu Brigade Commanding General I. Narayan, is only the latest example. Jaswal told a U.S.-UK briefing on Monday that the FARDC had subsequently moved the artillery, but had refused to tell MONUC

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its new location.

Russian BNP's in Goma

¶6. (SBU) Mwambulutuku reported all nine of the DRC's Russian-made BNP's (armored personnel carriers) are now on the ground in Goma; he has seen them and describes them as "old." He said Kabila's Republican Guard led the tank-like vehicles into town after they had been barged up from Bukavu. The BNP's had initially been deployed in Walikale territory in the west of the province after being transported by boat from Kinshaha to Kisangani. They were ordered down the road to Bukavu's port earlier in the month. A former Kabila adviser with close ties to South Kivu politics reported the BNP's caused widespread panic in Bukavu when they arrived following the dismissal of Governor Celestin Cibalanza by the provincial assembly. He said he had received numerous messages from panicked contacts convinced that Kabila had sent "tanks" to reinstate Cibalanza, who is widely viewed as a tool of Kabila and National Assembly President Vital Kamerhe.

GARVELINK